

TAM O'SHANTER.

A TALE.

BY ROBERT BURNS.

Of Brownie and of Bogie full is this Book.

GAWIN DOUGLAS.

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TAM O'SHANTER.

THE MAN O' MAT.

WHEN Chapman billies leave the street,
And drouthy neibours neibours meet,
As market-days are wearin late,
And fock begin to tak the gate;
While we sit bousing at the nappy,
And getting fou and unco happy,
We think na on the lang Scotch miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and stiles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gath'ring her brows like gath'ring storm
Nursin her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam O'Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter,
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonny lasses.)

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice;
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blithering, blustering, drunken blellum,
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was nae sober;
That ilka melder, wi' the miller,
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That every nag was ca'd a shoe on,
The smith and thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the L—d's House, even on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday:
She prophesy'd, that late or soon,
Thou wad be found deep drown'd in Doon;
Or catch'd wi' warlocks i' the mirk,

In Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,
To think how many counsels sweet,
How many lengthen'd sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale! Ae market-night,
Tam had got planted unco right
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter Johnny,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony;
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter,
And aye the ale was growing better:
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
Wi' favours, secret, sweet, and precious;
The Souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus;
The storm without might rair and rustle.
Tam did not mind the storm a whistle.

Care, mad to see a man so happy,
E'en drown'd himsel amang the nappy.
As bees flee hame wi' lasses o' treasure,
The minutes wing'd their way wi' pleasure:
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts for ever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit e'er you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,

Evanishing amid the storm—
 Nae man can tether time or tide;
 The hour approaches Tam maun ride;
 That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane,
 That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
 And sic a night he taks the road in,
 As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in!

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last,
 The rattlin show'rs rose on the blast;
 The speedy gleams the darkness swallow'd;
 Loud, deep and lang the thunder bellow'd!
 That night a child might understand
 The deil had bis'ness on his hand.

Weel mounted on his grey mare Meg,
 A better never lifted leg,
 Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
 Despisin wind, and rain, and fire;
 Whyles haddin fast his guid blue bonnet,
 Whyles croonin owre some auld Scots sonnet;
 Whyles glow'rin round wi' prudent care,
 Lest bogles catch him unawares;
 Kirk-Alloway was drawin nigh,
 Whar ghaists and howlets nightly cry—

By this time he was cross'd the ford,
 Whar in the snaw the chapman smoor'd;
 And past the birks and muckle stane,
 Whar drunken Charlie brak's neck-bane;
 And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,
 Whar hunters fand the murder'd bairn;
 And near the thorn, aboon the well,
 Whar Mungo's mother hang'd hersel—
 Before him Doon pours a' his floods,
 The doublin storm roars through the woods;
 The lightnings flash frae pole to pole;

Near and more near the thunders roll
 When, glimmerin' thro' the groaning trees
 Kirk Alloway seem'd in a bleeze!
 Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancin'
 And loud resounded mirth and dancin'.

Inspirin' bold John Barleycorn!
 What dangers thou can mak us scorn!
 Wi' tippeny we fear nae evil;
 Wi' usquebae we'll face the devil!—
 The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,
 Fair play, he car'd na deils a boddle;
 But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,
 Till by the heel and hand admonish'd,
 She ventur'd forward on the light;
 And, vow! Tam saw an unco sight:
 Warlocks and witches in a dance;
 Nae cotillion brent new frae France,
 But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys and reels,
 Pat life and mettle in their heels:
 A winnock-bunker in the east,
 There sat auld Nick in shape o' beast;
 A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,
 To gie them music was his charge:
 He screw'd the pipes, and gart them skirl,
 Till roof and rafters a' did dirl,—
 Coffins stood round like open presses,
 That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;
 And by some devilish cantrip slight,
 Each in its cauld hand held a light;
 By which heroic Tam was able
 To note upon the haly table,
 A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
 Twa span-lang, wee, unchristen'd bairns;
 A thief, new cutted frae a rape,

Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape!
 Five tomahawks, wi' blude red rusted
 Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted
 A garter, which a babe had strangled
 A knife, a father's throat had mangled
 Whom his ain sonco' life hereft,
 The grey hairs yet stack to the heft
 Three lawyer's tongues turn'd inside-out,
 Wi' lies seam'd like a beggar's clout
 And priests' hearts, rotten black as muck,
 Lay stinkin vile in every neuk
 Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu' boote
 Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'
 As Tammie glower'd, amaz'd and curious,
 The mirth and fun grew fast and furious
 The piper loud and louder blew,
 The dancers quick and quicker flew
 They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit,
 Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,
 And koost her duddies to the wark,
 And linkit at it in her sark!

Now Tam, O Tam! had they been queans o'
 A' plump and strapping in their teens,
 Their sarks, instead o' creechie flannet,
 Been snaw-white se'enteen hunder linen,
 Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
 That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
 I wad hae gi'en them aff my hurdies,
 For ae blink o' the bonny burdies!
 But wither'd beklams, auld and droll,
 Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal;
 Louping and flinging on a crummock,
 I wonder't didna turn your stomach.

But Tam kend what was what fa' brawlie,

There was ae winsome wench and walie,
 That night enlisted in the core,
 Lang after kend on Carrick-shore;
 For monie a beast to dead she shot,
 And perish'd monie a bonnie boat,
 And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
 And kept the country-side in fear;
 Her cutty sark o' Paisley-harn,
 That while a lassie she had worn,
 In longitude tho' torely scanty,
 It was her best and she was vauntie—
 Ah! little kend thy reverend granpie,
 That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,
 Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a her riches)
 Wad e'er hae grac'd a dance o' witches.
 But here my Muse her wing maun't cow'r;
 Sic flights are far beyond her pow'r;
 To sing how Nannie tap and flang,
 (A souple jade she was and strang),
 And how Tam stood like ane bewitch'd,
 And thought his very een enricht
 Ev'n Satan glow'd, and fidg'd fu fain,
 And hotch'd and blew wi' might and main,
 Till first ae caper, syne another,
 Tam tint his reason a' thegither;
 And roars, and reels, and cuts up sark,
 And in an instant 'twas dark—
 And scarcely had he Maggie rallied
 When out the hellish legion sallied,
 As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,
 When ploud'ring herds assaith their hyke;
 As open pussie's mortal foes,
 When, pop! she starts before their nose,
 As eager runs the market crowd,

When Catch the thief! resounds aloud;
 So Maggie rins, the witches follow,
 Wi' mony an eldritch screech and hollow!

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin,
 In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!
 In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin;
 Kate soon will be a wae fu' woman!
 Now do thy speedy utmost Meg,
 And win the key-stane* o' the brig;
 There at them thou thy tail may toss,
 A rinnin stream they darena cross.
 But ere the key-stane she could make,
 The fient a tail she had to shake!
 For Nannie, far before the rest,
 Hard upon noble Maggie prest,
 And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle!
 But little wist she Maggie's mettle—
 Ae spring brought aff her master hale,
 But left behind her ain grey tail:
 The carlin' caught her by the rump,
 And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now wha this tale o' truth shall read,
 Ilk man and mother's son tak heed,
 Whene'er to drink you are inclin'd,
 Or cutty-sarks rin in your mind,
 Think ye may buy the joys owre dear,
 Remember Tam O'Shanter's mare.

* It is a well-known fact, that Witches or any evil spirits, have no power to follow a poor wight any farther than the middle of the next running stream.—It may be proper likewise to mention to the benighted traveller, that when he falls in with bogles, whatever danger may be in his going forward, there is much more danger in turning back.

